



March 13, 2017

Dear Colleague,

April is STD Awareness Month. This year, we ask for you to join us in tackling the dangerous resurgence of syphilis.

Syphilis elimination was in our sights a decade ago, yet today we find ourselves at a critical crossroads for syphilis prevention. Reported cases and rates for primary and secondary syphilis are the highest they have been in more than 20 years. Syphilis incidence is particularly severe among gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men (MSM). It's also rising among women, which has triggered a surge in congenital syphilis. Rates have increased in every region, a majority of age groups, and across almost every race/ethnicity. CDC has also seen an increase in reports of ocular syphilis in recent years. These data are a clear reminder that syphilis can strike many communities at anytime and anywhere.

For these reasons, throughout April, we will promote the theme of ***Syphilis Strikes Back*** to capture what is happening today in the United States. The theme is also a nod to the 1940s – an era when syphilis's destruction was at its peak, but also a period that ushered in antibiotics and the beginning of a successful push to halt the disease.

Those of us who have been in public health a long time know that syphilis is a constant threat; however, the good news is that we've beaten syphilis back before, and we can do it again. Together, we can make a difference.

This year's social media and web-based outreach efforts will focus on the following weekly syphilis prevention themes:

- (April 1-8) | **Syphilis in the U.S.** – An overview of what it is, how it's affecting specific communities, and why this potentially dangerous health issue needs attention
- (April 9-15) | **Syphilis among gay, bisexual and other MSM** – Focus on the group hardest hit by syphilis and what individuals and healthcare providers can do to help
- (April 16-22) | **Syphilis among women, pregnant women, and newborns** – Focus on the increases among women and its impact on pregnant women and newborns, as well as what individuals and healthcare providers can do to help
- (April 23-30) | **Disrupt Syphilis!** – The final week will focus on what actions are needed to tackle syphilis moving forward

How you can get involved

As you are mapping out your STD Awareness Month plans, take a look at the following tools for your use:

- The [STD Awareness Month website](#) has been revamped to include basic information on syphilis and prevention information tailored to people who may be impacted by the disease, as well as healthcare providers.

- CDC [prevention resources](#) to share with your partners, member groups, communities, and others or to post to your website! There are updated fact sheets, brochures, online banners, STD testing site locators and much more (including syphilis-specific products).
- [Syndicated website content](#) for your use to ensure your website contains the most recent CDC STD information.
- [Sample tweets and Facebook posts](#) to use throughout April for those of you on social media. Please use #STDMonth17 when promoting STD Awareness Month.
- A 'Twitter Takeover' with the Office on Women's Health that you can promote and/or join and retweet messages to your own followers. On Tuesday, April 18, from 12pm-4pm, CDC STD's twitter account (@CDCSTD) will take over their account (@WomensHealth) to distribute key syphilis prevention messages for women and clinicians.
- A [Thunderclap](#), in which you can participate and help amplify our syphilis prevention messages across multiple social media platforms (see the [Thunderclap](#) website for more information).

To health departments, healthcare providers, and community-based organizations: You are the backbone of STD prevention in this country. Your work to reach and empower individuals about sexual health is unparalleled. We couldn't succeed without you!

Thank you for your commitment to STD Prevention.

Best Regards,

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Stay in touch with the Division of STD Prevention by following @CDCSTD on [Twitter](#) and by liking CDC STD on [Facebook](#).